

# The Secrets of the Hohenzollerns

STARTLING EXPOSURE OF INNER LIFE OF KAISER AND CROWN PRINCE AS TOLD BY COUNT ERNST VON HELTZENDORFF TO WILLIAM LEQUEUX

**EDITORIAL NOTE.**—William Lequeux, who here chronicles for his friend, Count Ernst von Helztendorff, the latter's revelations of the inner life of the Imperial German court, has long been recognized throughout Europe as the possessor of its innermost secrets.

The English "Who's Who" says of him: "He has intimate knowledge of the secret service of Continental countries and is considered by the government (of Great Britain) an authority on such matters." Another authority says: "Few people have been more closely associated with or know more of the astounding inner machinery of Germany than he."

Lequeux probably has more sources of secret information at his command than any contemporary in civil life, and for the last six years the British Government has made valuable use of his vast store of secret information through a specially organized department with which Lequeux works as a voluntary assistant.

Count von Helztendorff became an intimate of Lequeux several years prior to the outbreak of the war; he has been living in retirement in France since August, 1914, and it was there that Lequeux received from the crown prince's late personal adjutant permission to make public these revelations of the inner life of the Hohenzollerns—that the democracies of the world might come to know the real, but heretofore hidden, personalities of the two dominant members of the autocracy they are now arrayed against.

## British Girl Balks The Kaiser's Plans

HOW completely we have put to sleep these very dear cousins of ours, the British! His imperial highness, the crown prince made this remark to me as he sat in the corner of a first-class compartment of an express that had ten minutes before left Paddington station for the West of England.

The crown prince, though not generally known, frequently visited England and Scotland incognito, and we were upon one of those flying visits on that bright summer's morning as the express tore through the delightful English scenery of the Thames valley, with the first stopping place at Plymouth, our destination.

The real reason for the visit of my young not-headed imperial master was concealed from me.

Four days before he had dashed into my room at the Marmor palace at Potsdam. He had been with the emperor in Berlin all the morning, and had motored back with all speed. Something had occurred but what it was I failed to discern. He carried some papers in the pocket of his military tunic. From their color I saw that they were secret reports—those documents prepared solely for the eyes of the kaiser and those of his oldest son.

He took a big linen-lined envelope and, placing the papers in it, carefully sealed it in wax.

"We are going to London, Helztendorff. Put that in your dispatch box. I may want it when we are in England."

"To London—when?" I asked, surprised at the suddenness of our journey, because I knew that we were due at Weimar in two days' time.

"We leave at six o'clock this evening," was the crown prince's reply. "Koehler has ordered the salon to be attached to the Hook of Holland train. Hardt has already left Berlin to engage rooms for us at the Ritz, in London."

"And the suite?" I asked, for it was one of my duties to arrange who traveled with his imperial highness.

"Oh! We'll leave Eckhardt at home," he said, for he always hated the surveillance of the commissioner of secret police. "We shall only want Schuler, my valet, and Knof."

We never traveled anywhere without Knof, the chauffeur, who was an impudent, arrogant young man, intensely disliked by everyone.

So it was that the four of us duly landed at Harwich and traveled to London, our identity unknown to the jostling crowd of tourists returning from their annual holiday on the continent.

At the Ritz, too, "Willie" was not recognized, because all photographs of him show him in an elegant uniform. In a tweed suit, or in evening clothes, he presents an unhealthy, weedy, and somewhat insignificant figure.

His imperial highness had been on the previous day to Carlton House terrace to a luncheon given by the ambassador's wife, but to which nobody was invited but the embassy staff.

That same evening an Imperial courier arrived from Berlin and called at the Ritz, where, on being shown into the crown prince's sitting room, he handed his highness a sealed letter from his wife.

"Willie," on reading it, became very grave. Then, striking a match, he lit it, and held it until it was consumed. There was a second letter—which I saw from the emperor. This he also read, and then gave vent to an expression of impatience. For a few minutes he reflected, and it was then he announced that we must

On arrival there we went to the Royal hotel, where the crown prince registered as Mr. Richter, engaging a private suite of rooms for himself and his secretary, myself. For three days we remained there, taking motor runs to Dartmoor, and also down into Cornwall, until on the morning of the fourth day the crown prince said:

"I shall probably have a visitor this morning about eleven o'clock—a young lady named King. Tell them at the bureau to send her up to my sitting room."

At the time appointed the lady came. I received her in the lobby of the self-contained flat, and found her to be about twenty-four, well-dressed, fair-haired and extremely good-looking.

Miss King, I learned, was an English girl who some years previously had gone to America with her people, and by the heavy traveling coat and close-fitting hat she wore I concluded that she had just come off one of the incoming liners.

One thing which struck me as I looked at her was the brooch she wore. It was a natural butterfly of a rare tropical variety, with bright golden wings, the delicate sheen of which was protected by small plates of crystal—one of the most charming ornaments I had ever seen.

As I ushered her in she greeted the crown prince as "Mr. Richter," being apparently entirely unaware of his real identity. I concluded that she was somebody whom his highness had met in Germany, and to whom he had been introduced under his assumed name.

"Ah! Miss King!" he exclaimed pleasantly in his excellent English, shaking hands with her. "Your boat should have been in yesterday. I fear you encountered bad weather—eh?"

"Yes, rather," replied the girl. "But it did not trouble me much. We had almost constant gales ever since we left New York," she laughed brightly. She appeared to be quite a charming little person.

"Helztendorff, would you please bring me that sealed packet from your dispatch box?" he asked suddenly, turning to me.

The sealed packet! I had forgotten, all about it ever since he had handed it to me at the door of the Marmor palace. I knew that it contained some secret reports prepared for the eye of the emperor. The latter had no doubt seen them, for the crown prince had brought them with him from Berlin.

As ordered, I took the packet into the room where his highness sat with his fair visitor, and then I retired and closed the door.

"I can't; it would be dishonest!"

Hotel doors are never very heavy, as a rule, therefore, I was able to hear conversation, but unfortunately few words were distinct. The interview had lasted nearly half an hour. Finding that I could hear nothing, I contented myself in reading the paper and holding myself in readiness should "Mr. Richter" want me.

Of a sudden I heard his highness' voice raised in anger, that shrill, high-pitched note which is peculiar both to the emperor and to his son when they are unusually annoyed.

"But I tell you, Miss King, there is no other way," I heard him shout. "It can be done quite easily, and nobody can possibly know."

"Never!" cried the girl. "What would people think of me?"

"You wish to save your brother," he said. "Very well, I have shown you how you can effect this. And I will help you if you agree to the terms—if you will find out what I want to know."

"I can't!" cried the girl in evident distress. "I really can't! It would be dishonest—criminal!"

"Bah! my dear girl, you are looking at the affair from far too high a standpoint," replied the man she knew as Richter. "It is a mere matter of business. You ask me to assist you to save your brother, and I have simply stated my terms. Surely you would not think that I would travel from Berlin here to Plymouth in order to meet you if I were not ready and eager to help you?"

"I must ask my father. I can speak to him in confidence."

"Your father!" cried Mr. Richter. "By no means. Why, you must not breathe a single word to him. This affair is a strict secret between us. Please understand that." Then, after a pause: "Your brother is, I quite admit, in direst peril, and you alone can save him. Now, what is your decision?"

The girl's reply was in a tone too low for me to overhear. Its tenor, however, was quickly apparent from the crown prince's words:

"You refuse! Very well, then, I cannot assist you. I regret, Miss King, that you have your journey to England for nothing."

"But won't you help me, Mr. Richter?" cried the girl appealingly.

"No," was his answer. "I will, however, give you opportunity to reconsider your decision. You are, no doubt, going to London. So my son will meet me in the hall of the

## A LETTER FROM THE CROWN PRINCE'S PERSONAL ADJUTANT TO WILLIAM LEQUEUX, POSSESSOR OF THE SECRETS OF EUROPE.

Veneux Nadon,  
par Moret-sur-Loing,  
Seine-et-Marne,  
February 10th, 1917.

My dear Lequeux:

I have just finished reading the proofs of your articles describing my life as an official at the imperial court at Potsdam, and the two or three small errors you made I have duly corrected.

The gross scandals and wily intrigues which I have related to you were many of them known to yourself, for, as the intimate friend of Luise, the ex-crown princess of Saxony, you were, before the war, closely associated with many of those at court whose names appear in these articles.

The revelations which I have made, and which you have recorded here, are but a tithe of the disclosures which I could make, and if the world desires more, I shall be pleased to furnish you with other and even more startling details, which you may also put into print.

My service as personal adjutant to the German crown prince is, happily, at an end, and now, with the treachery of Germany against civilization glaringly revealed, I feel, in my retirement, no compunction in exposing all I know concerning the secrets of the kaiser and his son.

With most cordial greetings from  
Your sincere friend,  
(Signed) ERNST VON HELTZENDORFF.

day evening, and we will dine together."

"But I can't—I really can't do as you wish. You surely will not compel me to—to commit a crime!"

—The Crown Prince's Threat.

"Hush!" he cried. "I have shown you these papers, and you know my instructions. Remember that your father must know nothing. Nobody must suspect, or you will find yourself in equal peril with your brother."

"You—you are cruel!" sobbed the girl.

"No, no," he said cheerfully. "Don't cry, please. Think it all over, Miss King, and meet me in London on Thursday night."

After listening to the appointment, I discreetly withdrew into the corridor on pretense of summoning a waiter, and when I returned the pretty English girl was taking leave of "Mr. Richter."

Her blue eyes betrayed traces of emotion, and she was, I saw, very pale, her bearing quite unlike her attitude when she had entered there.

"Well, good-by, Miss King," said his highness, grasping her hand. "It was really awfully good of you to call. We shall meet again very soon—eh? Good-by."

Then, turning to me, he asked me to conduct her out.

On returning to the crown prince, I found him in a decidedly savage mood. He was pacing the floor impatiently, muttering angrily to himself, for it was apparent that some plan of his was being thwarted by the girl's refusal to conform to his wishes and obtain certain information he was seeking.

The crown prince, when in a foreign country, was never idle. His energy was such that he was ever on the move, with eyes and ears always open to learn whatever he could. Hence it was at two o'clock that afternoon Knof brought round a big gray open car, and in it I sat beside the emperor's son while we were driven around the defenses of Plymouth, just as on previous occasions we had inspected those of Portsmouth and of Dover.

On the following Thursday evening we had returned to London, and the crown prince, without telling me where he was going, left the Ritz hotel, merely explaining that he might not be back till midnight. It was on that occasion, my dear Lequeux, you will remember, that I dined with you at the Devonshire club, and we afterward spent a pleasant evening together at the Empire.

I merely told you that his highness was out at dinner with a friend. You were, naturally, inquisitive, but I did not satisfy your curiosity. Secrecy was then my duty.

A Sample of German Preparedness.

On returning to the hotel I found the crown prince arranging with Knof a motor run along the Surrey hills on the following day. He had a large map spread before him—a German military map, the curious marks upon which would have no doubt astonished any war office official. The map indicated certain spots which had been secretly prepared by Germany in view of the projected invasion.

To those spots we motored on the following day. His Imperial Highness, at the instigation of the emperor, actually made a tour of inspection of those cunningly concealed points of vantage which the Imperial general staff had, with their marvelous foresight and bold enterprise, already prepared right beneath the very nose of the sleeping British lion.

From the crown prince's jaunty manner and good spirits I felt assured that by the subtle persuasive powers he possessed towards women he had brought the mysterious Miss King into line with his own plans—whatever they might be.

We lunched at the Bedford Bridge hotel, that pretty, old-fashioned house beneath Box Hill, not far from Dorking.

After our meal in the long public room, we strolled into the grounds for a smoke.

"Well, Helztendorff," he said presently, "we will return in the contingent tomorrow. Our visit has not been altogether unprofitable. We will

again a few days in Ostend, before we return to Potsdam."

Next afternoon we had taken up our quarters at a small but very select hotel on the Digue at Ostend, a place called the "Beau Séjour." It was patronized by old-fashioned folk, and "Herr Richter" was well known there.

There may have been some who suspected that Richter was not the visitor's real name, but they were few, and it always surprised me how well the crown prince succeeded in preserving his incognito—though, of course, the authorities knew of the imperial visit.

The English Girl Again.

The following day, about three o'clock, while the crown prince was carelessly going through some letters brought by couriers from Potsdam, a waiter came to me with a message that a Miss King desired to see Mr. Richter.

In surprise I received her, welcoming her to Ostend. From the neat dress of the pretty English girl I concluded that she had just crossed from Dover, and she seemed most anxious to see his highness. I noted that she still wore the beautiful golden butterfly.

When I entered his room to announce her the crown prince's brow knit, and his thin lips compressed.

"H'm! More trouble for us, Helztendorff. I suppose! Very well, show her in."

The fair visitor was in the room for a long time—indeed, for over an hour. Their voices were raised, and now and then, curiously enough, I received the impression that whatever might have been the argument, the pretty girl had gained her own point, for when she came out she smiled at me in triumph, and walked straight forth and down the stairs.

The crown prince threw himself into a big armchair in undisguised dissatisfaction. Towards me he never wore a mask, though, like his father, he invariably did so in the presence of strangers.

"Those accursed women!" he cried. "Ah, Helztendorff, when a woman is in love she will defy even Satan himself! And yet they are fools, these women, for they are in ignorance of the irresistible power of our Imperial house. The enemies of the Hohenzollerns are as a cloud of gnats on a summer's night. The dew comes, and they are no more. It is a pity. Has not one of our greatest German philosophers written: 'It is no use breathing against the wind'?"

"True," I said. "But, surely, it is a nuisance to be followed and worried by that little English girl!"

"Worried! Yes, you are quite right, my dear Helztendorff. But I do not mind worry, if it is in the interests of Prussia, and of our house of Hohenzollern. I admit the girl, though distinctly pretty, is a most irresponsible person. She does not appeal to me, but I am compelled to humor her, because I have a certain object in view."

I could not go further, or I might have betrayed the knowledge I had gained by eavesdropping.

"I was surprised that she should turn up here, in Ostend," I said.

"I had written to her. I expected her."

"She does not know your real rank or station?"

"No. To her I am merely Herr Emil Richter, whom she first met away in the country. She was a tourist, and I was Captain Emil Richter of the Prussian Guards. We met while you were away on a holiday at Vienna."

I was anxious to learn something about Miss King's brother, but "Willie" was generally discreet, and at that moment unusually so. One fact was plain, however, that some secret report presented to the emperor had been shown to her. Why? I wondered if his highness had been successful in coercing her into acting as he desired.

Certainly the girl's attitude as she had left the hotel went to show that, in the contest, she had won by her woman's keen wit and foresight.

A fortnight afterwards we were back again at Potsdam.

A Surprise Package for "Willie."

About three months passed. The crown prince had accompanied the emperor on his tour of the Baltic coast.

that wild mountainous district beyond Breslau. For a week we had been staying at a great, high-up prisonlike schloss, the ancestral home of Prince Ludwig Lichtenau, in the Wolfelsgrund.

The emperor and his suite had left, and our host had been suddenly called to Berlin by telegram, his daughter having been ill. Therefore, the crown prince and we of the suite had remained for some further sport.

On the day after the emperor's departure I had spent the afternoon in a small paneled room which overlooked a deep mountain gorge, and which had been given up to me for work. I was busy with correspondence when the courier from Potsdam entered and gave me the battered leather pouch containing the crown prince's letters. Having unlocked it with my key, I found among the correspondence a small square packet addressed to his imperial highness, and marked "private."

"Now, fearing bombs or attempts by other means upon his son's life, the emperor had commanded me always to open packets addressed to him. This one, however, being marked 'private,' and, moreover, the inscription being in a feminine hand, I decided to await his highness' return."

When at last he came in, wet and muddy after a long day's sport, I showed him the packet. With a careless air he said: "Oh, open it, Helztendorff. Open all packets, whether marked private or not."

"I obeyed, and to my surprise found within the paper a small leather-covered jewel case, in which, reposing upon a bed of dark blue velvet, was the beautiful ornament which I had admired at the throat of the fair-haired British girl—the golden butterfly."

I handed it to his highness just as he was taking a cigarette from the box on a side table.

The sight of it electrified him. He held his breath, standing for a few seconds staring at it as though he were gazing upon some specter. His countenance was as white as paper.

"When did that arrive?" he managed to ask, in a hoarse voice, which showed how completely sight of it had upset him.

"This afternoon. It was in the courier's pouch from Potsdam."

"If the Truth Came Out."

He seemed highly nervous, and at the same time extremely puzzled. Receipt of that unique and beautiful brooch was, I saw, some sign, but of its real significance I remained in entire ignorance.

That it had a serious meaning I quickly realized, for within half an hour the crown prince and myself were in the train on our 200-mile journey back to Berlin.

On arrival his imperial highness drove straight to the Berlin Schloss, and there had a long interview with the emperor. At last I was called into the familiar pale-green room, the kaiser's private cabinet, and at once saw that something untoward had occurred.

The emperor's face was dark and thoughtful. The crown prince, in his badly creased uniform betraying a long journey—so unlike his usual spick-and-span appearance, stood nervously by as the kaiser threw himself into his writing chair with a deep grunt and distinctly evil grace.

"I suppose it must be done," he growled to his son. "Did I not foresee that the girl would constitute a serious menace? When she was in Germany she might easily have been arrested upon some charge and her mouth closed. Bah! our political police service grows worse and worse. We will have it entirely reorganized. The director, Laubach, is far too sentimental, far too chicken-hearted."

As he spoke he took up his pen and commenced to write rapidly, drawing a deep breath as his quill scratched upon the paper.

"You realize," he exclaimed angrily to his son, taking no notice of my presence there, because I was part and parcel of the great machinery of the court, "you realize what this order means? It is a blow struck against our cause—struck by a mere slip of a girl. Think, if the truth came out! Why, all our propaganda in the United States and Britain would be nullified in a single day, and the 'good relations' we are now extending on every hand throughout the world in order to mislead our enemies would be exposed in all their true meaning. We cannot afford that. It would be far cheaper to pay twenty million marks—the annual cost of the whole propaganda in America—than to allow the truth to be known."

Suddenly the crown prince's face brightened, as though he had had some inspiration.

"The truth will not be known, I promise you," he said, with a strange grin. I knew that expression. It meant that he had devised some fresh plan. "The girl is defiant today, but she will not remain so long. I will take your order, but I may not have

"Ah! You have perhaps devised something—eh? I hope so," said the emperor. "You are usually ingenious in a crisis. Good! Here is the order; act just as you think fit."

"I was summoned, your majesty," I said, in order to remind him of my presence there.

"Ah! Yes. You know this Miss King, do you not?"

"I received her in Plymouth," was my reply.

"Ah! then you will recognize her. Probably your services may be very urgently required within the next few hours. You may go," and his majesty curtly dismissed me.

I waited in the corridor until his imperial highness came forth. When he did so he looked flushed and seemed agitated. There had, I knew, occurred a violent scene between father and son, for to me it seemed as though "Willie" had again fallen beneath the influence of a pretty face.

He drove me in a big Mercedes over to Potsdam where I had a quantity of military documents awaiting attention, and after a change of clothes, I tackled them.

Yet my mind kept constantly reverting to the mystery surrounding the golden butterfly.

A Note From Miss King.

After dinner that night I returned to my workroom, when, upon my blotting-pad, I found a note addressed to me in the crown prince's sprawling hand.

Opening it, I found that he had scribbled this message:

"I have left. Tell Eckhardt not to trouble. Come alone, and meet me tomorrow night at the Palast hotel, in Hamburg. I shall call at seven o'clock and ask for Herr Richter. I shall also use that name. Tell nobody of my journey, not even the crown princess—Wilhelm, Kronprinz."

I read the note through a second time, and then burned it.

Next day I arrived at the Palast hotel, facing the Binnenalster, in Hamburg, giving my name as Herr Richter.

At seven o'clock I awaited his highness. Eight o'clock came—nine—ten—even eleven—midnight, but, though I sat in the private room I had engaged, no visitor arrived.

Just after twelve, however, a waiter brought up a note addressed to Herr Richter.

Believing it to be meant for me, I opened it. To my great surprise, I found that it was from the mysterious Miss King, and evidently intended for the crown prince. It read:

"My brother was released from the Altona prison this evening—I presume, owing to your intervention—and we are now both safely on our way across to Harwich. You have evidently discovered at last that I am not the helpless girl you believed me to be. When your German police arrested my brother Walter in Bremen as a spy of Britain I think you will admit that they acted very injudiciously, in face of all that my brother and myself know today. At Plymouth you demanded, as the price of Walter's liberty, that I should become attached to your secret service in America and betray the man who adopted me and brought me up as his own daughter. But you never dreamed the extent of my knowledge of your country's intrigues; you did not know that, through my brother and the man who adopted me as his daughter, I know the full extent of your subtle propaganda. You were, I admit, extremely clever, Herr Richter, and I confess that I was quite charmed when you sent me, as souvenir, that golden butterfly which I returned to you as a mark of my refusal and defiance of the conditions you imposed upon me for the release of my brother from the sentence of fifteen years in a fortress. This time, Herr Richter, a woman wins. Further, I warn you that if you attempt any reprisal my brother will at once expose Germany's machinations abroad. He has, I assure you, many good friends, both in Britain and America. Therefore if you desire silence you will make no effort to trace me further. Adieu!"

Twelve hours later I handed that letter to the crown prince in Potsdam. Where he had been in the meantime I did not know. He read it through; then he crushed it in his hands and tossed it into the fire.

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Navy Older Than Government.

The United States navy has the distinction of being somewhat older than the government itself, for nine months before the actual Declaration of Independence congress authorized the construction of two "national" cruisers and appointed a committee to purchase vessels to form the nucleus of a fleet.

Within three months of its appointment this committee got together 14 armed vessels and appointed a personnel of officers, among whom was the famous old sea dog, Paul Jones.

During the war of the revolution the infant navy captured as many as 500 prizes, but suffered so heavily that by the time peace was declared it had almost ceased to exist. A new start on a more ambitious scale was made in